

# petulu gunung, ubud

HOME TO **WHITE HERON BIRDS** AND **THE ARTISTIC IMAGINATION OF YAN SURYANA**

**T**hink of a word starting with the letter “B” that’s closely associated with Bali. You’ll probably come up with “beaches”, “beds” and – if you’re in Legian – “bums” and “bodies”. But unless you’ve gone off the beaten track and explored one particular village in north-east Ubud, another “B” that’s just as exciting will have escaped you.

Petulu Gunung, often shortened to Petulu, is a typical sleepy Balinese village with rows of identical houses along a main street criss-crossed by motorbikes. Sunrises and sunsets reflect warmly on the paddy fields, where you will see farmers toiling away with bent backs and lowered heads. Up above flocks of birds

sweep and swoop across the sky. Mornings see them darting off commuter-like to hunt for frogs and river creatures; the dusk in contrast is the rush hour when they fly back home to call it a day.

It is this association with birds that has enabled the village to be listed among Bali’s top tourism destinations. Some even know the location by the name *kokokan*, a Balinese word for the white heron birds. To some travellers, Petulu recalls the likeness of Komodo Island, where monitor lizards are the native inhabitants, and humans mere visitors.

The herons however are pretty much harmless and tend to avoid human contact. Feathered with white and beige shades of feather, they can be as tall as half a metre. Belonging to the crane species, this avian is bestowed with long legs that enable it to tread the paddy rice effortlessly. More often than not, the flocks assemble in the trees along the Petulu main road.

Entering the village means you have to shell out a small sum, approximately Rp. 10,000 per person. That doesn’t include any guide or map though, as the tourism infrastructure is lacking here. Yet it’s exhilarating to find Petulu still very much rural in comparison to the commercial districts around Bali.

The best way to observe the herons is to join the morning trek. Starting at 9am, the